



Classic Musical by Kurt Weill & Bertolt Brecht

The Threepenny Opera

Showdates: April 25-28, 2013

Director/Producer: Bettina Matthias
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Assistant Producer: Algy Layden
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Musical Director: Hannah Rommer

AUDITIONS

Thursday, January 10 at 7 pm at Middlebury College Axinn 229
Saturday, January 12 at 2 pm at Middlebury Town Hall Theater
Callbacks Sunday, January 13 at 2 pm at Middlebury Town Hall Theater

See details about auditions at the end of this document!

Synopsis: Brecht's/Weill's *The Threepenny Opera* (1928) is a complete reworking of John Gay's *Beggar's Opera* from 1728. Like Gay, Brecht pitches the dubious fence Mr. Peachum (who, in Brecht's version, is the head of an army of professional beggars whom he exploits systematically) against the leader of London's underworld, Captain Macheath, aka Mac the Knife, whose bandits raid the homes of the upper classes at night. The rivalry gets ugly when Peachum's daughter Polly decides to marry the charismatic Macheath, thus threatening the power relations in London. Peachum mobilizes every possible connection he has, including his acquaintance to London's police chief Tiger Brown, to lock his son-in-law away and get him hanged. Macheath's own dealings in town—his close friendship to brothel owner Jenny, his promise to marry Brown's daughter Lucy without following through, and his impressive command over his "army" of thieves—make him an easy target of the arm of the law. Gangster slapstick story and hilarious comedy poking fun at the traditional genre of the family drama, *The Threepenny Opera* is also and most poignantly an ardent satire and critique of modern capitalism. Power, property, and profit are the driving forces behind everyone's behavior, and crime has become anonymous: the play's two most "criminal" men, Peachum and Macheath, have their underlings to carry out what benefits them most; and love gets debunked as the desire to be the exclusive owner of a person's attention and affection. However, humor prevails in every twist of the play, and even though Brecht's stated goal in his so-called epic theater is to engage the audience critically with social problems that result from capitalist exploitation, he still manages to offer spectacular entertainment and a gripping story that gets even better with the brilliant, jazz-inspired music by Kurt Weill.

General Vision from Director Bettina Matthias:

Brechtian theater is mostly known as epic theater, working primarily with and through the "V-Effekt" (=alienation effect). This can sometimes lead to a rather didactic overall impression. However, *The Threepenny Opera* is different in several ways: for one, Brecht's original source, Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, is wildly comical, a trait that Brecht could not and did not want to write out of the play. Secondly, this is an earlier play by the German playwright in which the youthful enjoyment of play enters a happy union with

his political agenda. Thirdly, Kurt Weill's music, while fully in line with Brecht's aesthetic vision for the play and at the time, infuses this musical with a vitality that is one of its main driving forces.

We will perform the *Threepenny Opera* with band accompaniment, some numbers will have solo piano accompaniment. The set will be sparse and use Brecht's famous "epic panels" through which the author wishes to help the audience distance itself from all action on stage. The set's main feature will be a giant chessboard painted onto the stage floor on which characters, dressed in black and white, will move strategically, underlining the social commentary that Brecht wishes to make with his play.

We will cast for 17 roles, nine or ten should be male, eight or seven female, and role sizes vary greatly. Since Brechtian theater does not want the "pretty voice," any kind of voice really works, and not all actors have to sing if they do not wish to. Polly should be the closest to a lyric/ trained soprano, Mr. Peachum should have a fairly good (baritone) instrument and would benefit from a classically trained voice (but it is not required), Macheath and Tiger Brown need to have a very good sense of rhythm as one of their songs is rhythmically challenging, everyone else needs to read music and be able to hold a pitch.

Roles:

Macheath (28 – 35 years old), with vocal solo numbers

Polly Peachum (between 18 and 22 years old), with vocal solo numbers

Mr. and Mrs. Peachum (50 – 55 years old), with solo vocal numbers

Tiger Brown (40 – 45 years old), with vocal solo number (duet)

Lucy Brown (around 20), with vocal solo numbers (duet, possible also a solo)

"Spelunken-Jenny" (25 – 30 years old), with vocal solo number

Macheath's "gang of four" (20 – 35 years old), with vocal ensemble singing

Filch, Peachum's newest "employee" (any age), choir

Constable Smith (any age), choir

Reverend Kimball (50 – 70 years old), choir

At least two whores (18 – 40 years old), choir

Street singer (any age), vocal solo number

AUDITION DETAILS:

To audition, please prepare a short monologue of your choice from the comic/gangster comedy genre or, if you can find it, an excerpt from *The Threepenny Opera*.

For vocal auditions, we ask for the following songs from *The Threepenny Opera*:

All: please prepare the "Ballad of Mac the Knife"

Women: please prepare either Polly's "Barbara Song" or Mrs. Peachum's "Ballad of Sexual Dependency"

Men: please prepare either Peachum's "Morning Choral" or Macheath's "Ballad of the Pleasant Life"

Audition scores may be requested in advance from Bettina Matthias or Algy Layden. Should you wish to audition with additional or other materials, please notify Bettina or Algy at least a week before auditions.